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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 05/22/09

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Prime minister calls for return of four islands in package at Japan-Russia summit

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
May 22, 2009

Asahi Shimbun has learned that Prime Minister Aso during his talks with Prime Minister Putin on May 12 had asked for the settlement of the Northern Territories issue through the return of all four islands as a package, saying that the 1956 Declaration stipulating the return of the two islands of Habomai and Shikotan before the other islands in the territories would not settle the Northern Territories issue. This was revealed by a Japanese government source.

The prime minister at a meeting of the Upper House Budget Committee on May 21, as well, categorically said that he has no intention of adopting an in-stages approach of realizing the return of the islands of Habomai and Shikotan before the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu, whose possibility the government once searched for when Mori was prime ministers. He said, "If the attribution of the four islands is ascertained, we will respond to a timeframe for an actual return of such or the method of such a return in a flexible manner."

According to the same source, the prime minister announced this stance at the main session of the summit on the 12th. During a 15-minute one-on-one meeting with Putin, he reportedly underscored: "I would like to hear a firm reply at the July summit (to be held on the sidelines of the G-8 Summit.) I would like you to convey what we discussed today to President Medvedev (who will attend the G-8 Summit)."

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Putin pledged, "We will convey our stance properly at the July meeting." He also stated, "The president and I are in complete agreement on this issue." However, Putin said, "Though there were various oppositions and criticisms from various view points on the domestic front, I changed my stance to that of the 1956 Declaration." He thus stressed that it was a difficult decision to approve even the return of the two islands.

As other reasons why it is difficult to settle the Northern Territories issue, Putin cited domestic public opinion in Russia, and cases involving Ukraine, which fought with Russia over the Crimean Peninsula after the collapse of the USSR, and Kaliningrad, located on the coast of the Baltic Sea, which became the territory of the USSR after World War II. Putin thus reportedly pointed out the danger that if Russia gives in to Japan on the territorial issue, territorial disputes in its neighboring countries could rekindle.

Putin also stated at his talks with former prime minister Mori, which were held prior to the summit, that he did not want to replace the 2001 Irkutsk statement, which characterized the 1956 Declaration as the starting point for the negotiations process.

Given the series of statements made by Putin, there has appeared a view among Japanese government officials that there is only a slim chance of President Medvedev making an in-depth proposal. A Foreign Ministry official said, "There is a possibility of the president showing enthusiasm or proposing joint development."

(2) Russian Foreign Ministry criticizes prime minister for his statement: "Russia is illegally occupying the four islands"

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
May 22, 2009

Hideki Soejima, Moscow

Referring to the situation in the Northern Territories, Prime Minister Taro Aso said that they are illegally occupied by Russia. Russian Foreign Ministry Information and Press Department Spokesman Nesterenko on May 21 issued a statement criticizing his statement as unforgivable.

The prime minister at a meeting of the Upper House Budget Committee

on the 20th said: "The four northern islands have never become the territories of any foreign country. They are an integral part of Japan. It is very regrettable that the illegal occupation of the islands by Russia still continues more than 60 years after the end of World War II." He thus stressed the Japanese government's principle stance.

Nesterenko pointed out, "If there is anything illegal, it is Japan's demand, which has no legal basis at all." He criticized Aso, "The prime minister's statement will not lead to bilateral political dialogues and the creation of an environment conducive to implementing the agreements between the two countries on issues such as visa-free exchanges."

(3) Civilians to be sent to NATO-led PRT in Afghanistan for first time; Damage to Japan's neutrality feared

ASAHI (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)

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May 21, 2009

Erika Fuji, Atsuko Tannai

The government will send later this month civilians to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) military-civilian provincial reconstruction team (PRT) as part of the country's human contributions to reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan. Concerns are being heard in opposition parties and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that Japan's neutrality might be harmed or that humanitarian assistance involving troops might cause collateral damage.

Four individuals will be sent to Afghanistan: two male Foreign Ministry officials and two publicly-recruited female members, including one specializing in peace building. They will take part in the Lithuania-led PRT in the mid-western Afghan town of Chaghcharan in the status of secretaries at the Japanese Embassy in Kabul on a two-month rotational basis. They plan to survey local needs to lead to assistance in education, medicine and other fields under the protection of Lithuanian troops.

The publicly recruited are Hisako Ishizaki, 30, who previously worked at the Japanese Embassy in Iran, and Chihiro Imai, 41, who was engaged in reconstruction in Afghanistan as an NGO member.

This is the first time for Japan to dispatch personnel to a PRT by going a step further than providing financial aid. The step follows a visit in January 2007 to NATO headquarters by then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe where he announced Japan's plan to make humanitarian contributions in consideration of the United States. Abe specifically expressed eagerness to dispatch Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops. But the government eventually dropped the SDF option, saying that such might result in the use of force overseas which is prohibited under the Constitution.

The government then received a request last fall from Lithuania for Japanese civilians' participation (in the PRT). Lithuania, which could not afford to send its own civilians, had been looking for a country that could take over the role played by Iceland until last summer. In compliance with the request, the Foreign Ministry concluded based on the results of a fact-finding survey in Afghanistan that the security situation was relatively calm and that neither a suicide bombing nor the kidnapping of a foreigner had occurred.

Even so, some raised objections to the dispatch. For instance, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) lawmakers Tadashi Inuzuka, who is grappling with Afghan issues, noted: "People do not have an image that NATO-centered PRTs are neutral. Japan is regarded more neutral than the United Nations, so joining a PRT would be counterproductive."

Japanese NGOs and other organizations conducting activities in Afghanistan have been critical of the modalities of PRTs. Japan International Volunteer Center Afghanistan representative Takatoshi

Hasebe took this view: "As collateral damage increased, people's views toward foreign forces have become severe. Japan might be looked at in the same light, and that might take a toll on NGO activities."

According to Japanese aid agency source, there are cases in which

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aid agency and NGO workers conduct activities separately from PRTs in the judgment that working alongside PRT troops would increase risks.

(4) Clash on greenhouse gas reduction target; Prime minister to decide in June

ASAHI (Page 7) (Full)
May 22, 2009

Kenichi Goromaru, Tomohisa Yamaguchi

How much will Japan be able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 from the 1990 level? The tug-of-war among cabinet ministers, the business sector, labor, and environmental groups over the mid-term target for global warming prevention measures that Prime Minister Taro Aso will decide in June is growing in intensity. These players are divided in their support for the six options presented by the experts' group, but there are now moves to find a compromise.

Labor, business both support 4 PERCENT increase

A full-page advertisement was placed in the May 21 issue of Asahi Shimbun which stated: "Only Option 1 will ensure international fairness, appropriate burden on the people, and feasibility. Options 3 to 6 will have a serious impact on the social economy and impose an extremely heavy financial burden on families. Will they be feasible?"

The ad was placed by 59 economic and business organizations, including the Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) and the Japan Iron and Steel Federation, and seven industry-specific (mostly heavy industries) labor unions, including the Kikan-roren (Japan Federation of Basic Industry Workers' Unions). A joint advertisement by labor and business is very unusual.

Option 1 calls for controlling emissions at an increase of 4 PERCENT. This is the most lenient among the six options presented in April by the government's committee on the mid-term target. It is expected that the target can be met by continuing with current energy conservation efforts.

According to a government source, more than 50 PERCENT of the 10,000 comments collected from the public via e-mail through the government's "public comment" webpage (on the e-Gov website) also supported Option 1.

However, a senior government official says that, "With Option 1, it will not be possible to draw China into the international framework for global warming prevention." Environment Minister Tetsuo Saito also said at his news conference on May 12: "Japan will be ridiculed by the world if it comes up with a target like that," criticizing the Nippon Keidanren for supporting Option 1.

However, according to a Keidanren official, Chairman Fujio Mitarai reacted very strongly to the minister's remark. A senior Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) official lamented that, "I went to persuade him, telling him 'we also have to take international negotiations into account,' but he would not listen, so I had to leave."

Option 6 calling for a 25 PERCENT reduction, which is the opposite

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extreme of Option 1, has the support of environmental NGOs and other groups. Both the New Komeito party and the Democratic Party of Japan

are including this in their campaign platforms. However, this is premised on the upgrading of all equipment, including existing equipment, with the most advanced energy saving functions. It is said that this will result in the reduction of annual disposable income per household by 220,000 yen to 770,000 yen by 2020.

A senior Environment Ministry official voices the criticism that, "This does not take into account the elements of the Green New Deal (stimulating the economy with global warming prevention measures)," but admits that "25 PERCENT reduction will indeed be difficult."

7 PERCENT reduction a possible compromise

The mid-term target committee has also presented four options in between these two extremes. Option 2 calls for assigning reduction goals by country based on progress made in past energy conservation efforts (ranging from a 1 PERCENT increase to a 5 PERCENT reduction) with the basic goal being "a 25 PERCENT overall reduction by the developed countries." Option 4 would assign targets based on the size of the economy (8-17 PERCENT reduction). Option 3 would apply the target only to replacement equipment for the purpose of introducing the latest technology (7 PERCENT reduction), while Option 5 would apply this also to some existing equipment (15 PERCENT reduction).

While Options 2 and 4 will make Japan's reduction target lower, the computation formula is very complicated. It will be difficult to reach an agreement with the other developed countries that Japan needs to collaborate with.

Among these options, Option 3 has been attracting the most attention. The Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives), whose members are individual business operators, announced its support on May 18. Chairman Masamitsu Sakurai (chairman of Ricoh Company, Ltd.) paid a visit to Environment Minister Saito on the next day and told him that "the scientific viewpoint is also very important," taking into account the proposal of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for "25-40 PERCENT reduction by the developed nations." This made Saito very happy.

Option 3 is premised on "maximum introduction of energy conservation technology" as written into the METI council's long-term projection of energy demand and supply. Representatives of the industries participated in the discussions on this, so there is a growing opinion in the government that "this may be the lowest common denominator for all parties."

Meanwhile, an idea has also emerged in the government that the figures should be flexible to a certain extent in order to save some cards for future international negotiations.

The government will be holding a meeting of the council on global warming issues attended by Prime Minister Taro Aso on May 24, thus entering the final phase of coordination. However, since this is "a set of simultaneous equations with no real correct answer," where the wishes of businesses and scientists, international political agendas, and other factors all come into play, the prime minister will be facing some tough decisions.

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(5) Income falls to level 20 years ago; household income down to 5.56 million yen in 2007

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
May 22, 2009

Data from the "Comprehensive Basic Survey of the People's Living Conditions, 2008" published by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) on May 21 show that average household income in 2007 was 5,562,000 yen, the lowest in the 19 years since the Heisei Era started in 1989.

Average household income reached its peak in 1994 at 6,642,000 yen and has been declining consistently. It has now reverted to the 1988

level. The analysis of the MHLW's Office for the Basic Survey of the People's Living Conditions is that "the reasons are a reduction in the earnings of the bread winner and an increase in households consisting only of the aged." It is believed that this can be attributed to changes in the employment environment, such as the increase of mostly young non-regular workers who are unlikely to get substantial pay increases.

Average household income in 2007 dropped by 106,000 yen from the previous year. It has been pointed out that this was due to the cutback in bonuses in small and mid-sized businesses experiencing difficulties during this period.

The ratio of households that complained of "hard times," 57.2 PERCENT, was the same with the highest record marked in the 2007 report, exceeding the 50 PERCENT level for 11 consecutive years.

The ratio of households with lower-than-average income was 60.9 PERCENT, only 0.3 percentage points below that of the previous year, which was an all-time high. This figure exceeded 60 PERCENT for four years in a row. The median was 4,480,000 yen, which is regarded as closer to the perception of most households, and 44.3 PERCENT of households had income lower than 4 million yen.

In this survey, average income of households consisting of people 65 or older or of people who are above 65 and unmarried children who are 18 or younger was 2,989,000 yen, going below 3 million yen for the first time since 2004. Households with minor children (18 or younger) had an average income of 6,914,000 yen, dropping below 7 million yen for the first time since 1990.

The survey was conducted in June and July 2008.

(6) Toru Hasuike, brother of abductee, publishes book calling for priority to dialogue over sanctions

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
May 21, 2009

Toru Hasuike, former secretary general of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, published a new book titled: "Abduction - Heading toward fight beyond the barrier between rightists and leftists (Rachi - Sayuu no kakine o koeta tatakai he)," issued by Kamogawa Publishing Co. In the book, the elder brother of Kaoru (who had been abducted by North Korea but returned home in 2002) calls for giving priority to a dialogue over sanctions (in dealing with North Korea), taking a different stance from that of the families' group.

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No progress was made on the abduction issue during the past five years. Hasuike has attended left-wing groups' meetings since last year. In such meetings, he criticizes the Japanese government's stance of prioritizing sanctions in dealing with the North, claiming: "Even if relations between the two countries are hostile, both should hold discussion. Without dialogue, they will never be able to find a clue to resolving the issue."

His new book in the outset includes this phrase: "I am now under fire from rightists, unlike in the past, with such words as 'he changed sides,' and 'he is a betrayal'." But he says that his true intention is to prompt both right and left wings to move to rescue the abduction victims.

Ball in Japan's court

Hasuike emphasizes:

"I am still enthusiastic to resolve the abduction issue. But now I feel keenly that we should not be emotional but should be rational. To prompt the North to open the door to start negotiations, our side must take the North's views into consideration; otherwise, negotiations will never be carried out. The ball is in the Japanese court."

The present state, though, seems to be going against this direction. Citing Japan's response to North Korea's launch of a projectile in early April, Hasuike vents this view:

"It was an overreaction. Considering in a cool-headed manner, we should realize the Nodong (an intermediate-range ballistic missile) is a graver threat to Japan. I think Japanese hawks and munition companies took advantage of the North's test firing."

Hasuike further says:

"The Japanese government, while emphasizing that what the North did is wrong, has pledged to bring the victims back to Japan, but it has given a low priority to the North's nuclear development and Japan's wartime history. The government's assertion that the bad fellow must be expelled is understandable but is dangerous."

Hasuike stresses the need for studies and analysis of the deadlocked situation from a various angles. He expects that his new book will contribute to urging the government to start this effort.

(7) Editorial: Nuclear non-proliferation: Time to speed up agreement on test ban

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the international framework for achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. While there is criticism that the treaty is "dysfunctional," we should work for reinforcing the NPT regime in light of the recent rise in the opportunity for disarmament.

Delegates from member states stirred when U. S. President Barack Obama's message that, "Through cooperation and shared understanding, I am hopeful that we will strengthen the pillars of the NPT and restore confidence in its credibility and effectiveness" was read out at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review

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Conference held at the UN headquarters in early May.

The 2005 Review Conference failed to adopt an agreement and ended in discord due to conflict between the U.S. and the Middle Eastern countries. However, at the present preparatory committee, the assessment of the national delegates is that the agenda has been set and "the atmosphere for dialogue on the nuclear issue has emerged." The change in the U.S. administration's policy has presented a golden opportunity to strengthen the NPT regime.

The NPT requires the five "nuclear powers" - the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China - to "make sincere efforts to negotiate on nuclear disarmament." The U.S. and Russia have started talks on a new treaty for the reduction of strategic weapons. We hope that these two nations, which possess 90 PERCENT of the nuclear weapons in the world, will take the lead in disarmament.

On the other hand, India and Pakistan have refused to become NPT members and went ahead to possess nuclear arms. Iran is suspected of enriching uranium even though it is a NPT member.

An agreement on nuclear test ban is necessary to prevent proliferation and strengthen the NPT regime. The U.S. and China are now positive about ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). If they do ratify the treaty, this will constitute pressure on Iran, Israel, and other countries that have not done so.

There are three countries that are not signatories to the CTBT. India and Pakistan have claimed that they "will not conduct any further nuclear tests." Their accession to the treaty will attest to this promise. We also urge North Korea to refrain from conducting a second nuclear test.

Negotiations on the Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) banning the manufacture of fissile materials for use in weapons, which has been shelved for over a decade, should resume. There are numerous

issues for the NPT Review Conference in May 2010.
There have been numerous calls for nuclear disarmament since President Obama's speech on a "nuclear-free world" in Prague in April. Seventeen Nobel Prize laureates recently issued a "Hiroshima-Nagasaki Declaration" asking national leaders and citizens to take action toward the abolition of nuclear arms.

The Japanese government will convene an international conference on nuclear disarmament early next year. It should play a role in making this event contribute to strengthening the NPT regime.

(8) Sankei-FNN poll on Aso cabinet, political parties, DPJ's leadership change

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
May 19, 2009

Questions & Answers

(Note) Figures shown in percentage. Figures in parentheses denote findings from a previous Sankei-FNN survey conducted April 25-26.

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

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Yes 27.4 (28.2)
No 60.9 (59.2)
Don't know (D/K), etc. 11.7 (12.6)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 27.5 (29.2)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 30.5 (21.5)
New Komeito (NK) 4.0 (3.0)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 3.0 (2.9)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.3 (1.3)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.4 (0.5)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0.0 (0.1)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.0 (0.1)
Other political parties 0.2 (1.2)
None 31.4 (39.6)
D/K, etc. 1.7 (0.6)

Q: Do you appreciate Prime Minister Aso and his cabinet on the following points?

Prime Minister Aso's personal character

Yes 32.0 (37.7)
No 57.2 (55.5)
D/K, etc. 10.8 (6.8)

Prime Minister Aso's leadership

Yes 15.8 (16.6)
No 75.5 (78.4)
D/K, etc. 8.7 (5.0)

Economic policy

Yes 25.2 (27.6)
No 67.0 (65.8)
D/K, etc. 7.8 (6.6)

Foreign policy

Yes 31.1 (33.4)
No 50.1 (52.7)
D/K, etc. 18.8 (13.9)

Cash benefits

Yes 36.4 (39.2)
No 58.2 (55.7)
D/K, etc. 5.4 (5.1)

Expressway toll reductions

Yes 46.3 (58.0)
No 46.7 (37.7)
D/K, etc. 7.0 (4.3)

Preferential system for purchases of eco-friendly home electronics and automobiles

Yes 50.7 (---)

No 40.6 (---)

D/K, etc. 8.7 (---)

Response to Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Konoike's resignation

Yes 27.9 (---)

No 56.7 (---)

D/K, etc. 15.4 (---)

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Q: Do you have expectations for new DPJ President Hatoyama?

Yes 41.6

No 49.4

D/K, etc. 9.0

Q: Were you interested in the DPJ presidential election?

Yes 70.8

No 27.3

D/K, etc. 1.9

Q: Do you think DPJ President Ozawa's resignation was good for the DPJ?

Yes 73.8

No 17.6

D/K, etc. 8.6

Q: Do you think DPJ President Hatoyama is more appropriate as DPJ president than Mr. Katsuya Okada?

Yes 35.2

No 45.4

D/K, etc. 19.4

Q: Do you think Mr. Ozawa should continue to display his influence in a key party post?

Yes 35.5

No 57.4

D/K, etc. 7.1

Q: Do you think DPJ President Hatoyama will be more influenced by Mr. Ozawa than Mr. Okada?

Yes 80.7

No 9.1

D/K, etc. 10.2

Q: Is Mr. Ozawa's explanation of his resignation convincing?

Yes 21.2

No 72.9

D/K, etc. 5.9

Q: Do you think the DPJ presidential election's campaign period was too short?

Yes 64.9

No 27.8

D/K, etc. 7.3

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Aso and DPJ President Hatoyama, which one do you think is more trustworthy?

Prime Minister Aso 29.6

DPJ President Hatoyama 49.3

D/K, etc. 21.1

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Aso and DPJ President Hatoyama, which one do you think is better in terms of policy?

Prime Minister Aso 25.7
DPJ President Hatoyama 43.1
D/K, etc. 31.2

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Aso and DPJ President Hatoyama, who do you think would be more appealing in an election campaign?

Prime Minister Aso 30.1
DPJ President Hatoyama 46.7
D/K, etc. 23.2

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Aso and DPJ President Hatoyama, who do you think is more appropriate as prime minister?

Prime Minister Aso 33.1
DPJ President Hatoyama 37.7
D/K, etc. 29.2

Q: Do you think it is necessary to carry out the political reforms listed below and now being discussed between the ruling and opposition parties?

Reduce Diet members
Yes 87.5 (85.8)
No 8.1 (11.0)
D/K, etc. 4.4 (3.2)

Restrict hereditary politics
Yes 56.2 (51.9)
No 36.1 (41.5)
D/K, etc. 7.7 (6.6)

Prohibit corporate, organizational donations
Yes 68.0 (68.5)
No 24.0 (25.4)
D/K, etc. 8.0 (6.1)

Review the single-seat constituency system
Yes 69.1 (---)
No 16.7 (---)
D/K, etc. 14.2 (---)

Q: Do you feel uneasy about the new type of influenza?

Yes 76.5
No 22.9
D/K, etc. 0.6

Q: Are you doing something in your daily lives to prevent yourself from being infected with this novel flu virus?

Yes 67.2
No 32.4
D/K, etc. 0.4

Q: Do you think the government and local public entities have taken appropriate measures against the new influenza?

Yes 74.2
No 19.3
D/K, etc. 6.5

Q: Who do you think is most appropriate now as Japan's prime minister among the following politicians in the ruling and opposition parties?

Taro Aso 8.3 (8.7)
Nobuteru Ishihara 4.5 (5.4)
Yuriko Koike 3.1 (3.7)

Junichiro Koizumi 13.0 (11.7)
Yoichi Masuzoe 10.7 (10.6)
Kaoru Yosano 4.1 (5.3)
Other ruling party lawmakers 2.1 (3.5)
Yoshimi Watanabe 4.7 (4.0)
Ichiro Ozawa 3.7 (5.2)
Katsuya Okada 9.0 (5.4)
Naoto Kan 2.7 (2.8)
Akira Nagatsuma 2.0 (---)
Yukio Hatoyama 7.6 (2.2)
Seiji Maehara 2.4 (2.3)
Other opposition party lawmakers 2.6 (2.9)
None 15.3 (20.1)
D/K, etc. 4.2 (3.3)

Q: When do you think an election should be held for the House of Representatives?

Right away 16.3
In July right after passing the supplementary budget 40.0
Upon the current membership's expiry, or in August or afterward 40.3
D/K, etc. 3.4

Q: What do you think about replacing Prime Minister Aso before the next election for the House of Representatives?

He should resign and the election should be held under the new prime minister 18.4 (23.5)
Prime minister should be selected according to election results 77.0 (72.5)
D/K, etc. 4.6 (4.0)

Q: Which political party would you like to vote for in the next election for the House of Representatives in your proportional representation bloc?

LDP 31.3 (34.6)
DPJ 45.2 (34.0)
NK 4.7 (3.9)
JCP 3.5 (4.5)
SDP 1.7 (2.0)
PNP 0.7 (0.6)
RC 0.0 (0.0)
NPN 0.1 (0.4)
Other political parties 5.4 (10.3)
D/K, etc. 7.4 (9.7)

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted May 17 by the Sankei Shimbun and Fuji News Network (FNN) over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, a total of 1,000 persons were sampled from among men and women, aged 20 and over, across the nation.

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